

## Claims

What is claimed is:

- 1    1. A smart audio guide system for use in conjunction with an interactive content distribution system that includes a distribution head-end that makes programming available for viewing on a video display device at a viewer subsystem, the viewer subsystem including an audio unit to provide audio for the video display unit, the smart audio guide system comprising:
  - 5       a recommendation engine for providing a customized viewing-recommendations list for the viewer subsystem based upon the programming available from the interactive content distribution system and a customized viewing profile developed for the viewer subsystem;
  - 8       a processing unit configured and operative to implement the smart audio guide system functions;
- 10      a smart audio guide audio package that includes at least a plurality of smart audio guide audio clips corresponding to the customized viewing-recommendations list; and
- 12      a smart guide actuator that is configured and operative in response to one or more predetermined conditions to activate the processing unit;
- 14      wherein said processing unit is configured and operative to cause the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in a predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit when activated to identify programs recommended for viewing at the viewer subsystem based upon the customized viewing-recommendations list.
- 1    2. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the predetermined mode is one wherein the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips are uttered without a corresponding visual presentation of the customized viewing-recommendations list for the viewer subsystem.
- 1    3. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the predetermined mode is one wherein the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips are uttered in synchronization with a corresponding visual presentation of the customized viewing-recommendations list for the viewer subsystem.
- 1    4. The smart audio guide system of claim 3 wherein the corresponding visual presentation is a graphical recommendation menu, and wherein the processing unit is configured and

3       operative to implement a focus frame that visually focuses a corresponding program grid of the  
4       graphical recommendation menu in synchronization with the utterance of each of the plurality of  
5       smart audio guide audio clips.

1       5.      The smart audio guide system of claim 3 wherein corresponding visual presentation is an  
2       electronic program guide and wherein the processing unit is configured and operative to  
3       implement a focus frame that visually focuses a corresponding program grid of the electronic  
4       program guide in synchronization with the utterance of each of the plurality of smart audio  
5       guide audio clips.

1       6.      The smart audio guide system of claim 1 further comprising a speech generating unit,  
2       and wherein the smart audio guide audio package further comprises a plurality of smart audio  
3       guide text files; and wherein the processing unit is configured and operative to implement the  
4       speech generating unit to convert the plurality of smart audio guide text files into the plurality of  
5       smart audio guide audio clips.

1       7.      The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the viewer subsystem further includes a  
2       viewer control unit and wherein the smart audio guide actuator comprises a button on the  
3       viewer control unit, which when depressed, activates the processing unit to cause the plurality  
4       of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer  
5       subsystem via the audio unit .

1       8.      The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the smart audio guide actuator  
2       comprises a set of instructions that activates the processing unit to cause the plurality of smart  
3       audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via  
4       the audio unit when the video display device at the viewer subsystem is initially activated.

1       9.      The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the smart audio guide actuator  
2       comprises a set of instructions that activates the processing unit to cause the plurality of smart  
3       audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via  
4       the audio unit at the conclusion of a programming period.

1    10. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the smart audio guide actuator  
2    comprises a set of instructions that activates the processing unit to cause the plurality of smart  
3    audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via  
4    the audio unit upon activation of a graphical recommendation menu on the video display device  
5    at the viewer subsystem.

1    11. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the smart audio guide actuator  
2    comprises a set of instructions that activates the processing unit to cause the plurality of smart  
3    audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via  
4    the audio unit upon activation of an electronic program guide on the video display device at the  
5    viewer subsystem.

1    12. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the processing unit is configured and  
2    operative to temporarily discontinue the audio associated with programming being displayed  
3    via the video display device at the viewer subsystem when the plurality of smart audio guide  
4    audio clips are being uttered in a predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio  
5    unit.

1    13. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein each of the plurality of smart audio  
2    guide audio clips has an audio format that includes a first portion identifying a program name  
3    and a second portion identifying a viewing channel.

1    14. The smart audio guide system of claim 13 wherein each of the plurality of smart audio  
2    guide audio clips has a supplemented audio format wherein the first portion and the second  
3    portion are supplemented by additional audio information such that each of the plurality of  
4    smart audio guide audio clips has a sentence format.

1    15. The smart audio guide system of claim 1 further comprising:  
2        means for selecting a program for viewing from the customized viewing-  
3        recommendations list corresponding to one of the uttered smart audio guide audio clips.

1    16. The smart audio guide system of claim 15 wherein the viewer subsystem includes a  
2    viewer control unit having a plurality of numbers for selecting viewing channels and wherein the  
3    selecting means comprises the plurality of numbers of the viewer control unit, and wherein

4 selected ones of the plurality of numbers corresponding to the viewing channel of the one  
5 uttered smart audio guide audio clip are sequentially depressed to select the program for  
6 viewing corresponding to the one uttered smart audio guide audio clip.

1 17. The smart audio guide system of claim 15 wherein the viewer subsystem includes a  
2 viewer control unit having a select button and wherein the selecting means is the select button  
3 of the viewer control unit, and wherein the select button is depressed during utterance of the  
4 one uttered smart audio guide audio clip to select the program for viewing corresponding to the  
5 one uttered smart audio guide audio clip.

1 18. The smart audio guide system of claim 15 wherein the viewer subsystem includes a  
2 viewer control unit having a plurality of numbers and wherein the processing unit is configured  
3 and operative to activate individual ones of the plurality of numbers of the viewer control unit to  
4 correspond to viewing channels associated with the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips,  
5 and wherein the selecting means comprises the individually activated numbers of the viewer  
6 control unit, one which is selectively depressed to select a viewing channel corresponding to  
7 the program for viewing associated with the one uttered smart audio guide audio clip.